

Hamilton Sanderson was an old basset hound dog. He had lived with the Sanderson family since he was about three weeks old. He had a restful, peaceful life there. He never had to do anything. He was not a hunting dog, so he did not have to go on hunting trips with Mr. Sanderson and his sons. He was not a fancy show dog either, like a toy poodle. He was never invited to ride in the car with Mrs. Sanderson or to accompany her on her morning walks. Hamilton was just a plain old lovable family dog and he was content.

Hamilton slept under the cherry bush on the far corner of the house during the summer because it was shady and cool. He napped there for about two hours in the morning, ate lunch inside the house, then napped outside for the rest of the afternoon.

Hamilton did not enjoy the summertime. He could not tolerate the heat, but most of all; he hated the fleas that jumped around his body and bit his stomach. He scratched and scratched the fleas, but he still felt them jumping around.

One morning during a nap, Hamilton heard a flea inside his ear talking about a cat, but Hamilton paid no attention. He thought he must have been dreaming. Then he heard it again, "Wake up, old dog. There is a cat near...." Hamilton woke up quickly to see a cat ready to pounce on his tail, and he barked as loudly as he could to scare the cat away. The cat snarled at Hamilton and raced up a tree.

Then Hamilton said, "Who is that who warned me about the cat? Is there someone there in the bushes?".

"No, I am not in the bushes, dog. I am a flea and I am in your ear at the moment," said the flea. "And my name is Ralph."

Hamilton gratefully thanked the flea for warning him about the cat. He asked him how long he would be staying in his ear. "Well, it is up to you, Hamilton, because I know you do not like fleas in your ear, but I promise not to bite you or jump around too much," said Ralph.

"I have an idea Ralph; you may stay in my ear and be my friend for the summer, and we can take care of each other. I will not scratch you if you will keep an eye out for the cat while I am sleeping," said Hamilton. "It's a deal!" said Ralph.

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